

OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS, WISCON 46 IN 2023

WISCON 2023 POST-CON COVID-19 REPORT

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Two months after the end of the con, and well outside COVID-19's incubation period, we'd like to take this chance to give an overview of our COVID-19 safety measures, and their results. We hope sharing this information can be helpful not just to our own members as they continue to make decisions about their safety this year and up to the next WisCon, but also for any other organizations trying to hold safer events in the pandemic times.

COVID-19 Safety Measures for WisCon 2023

The following measures were taken by the hotel, the ConCom, and the COVID-19 Safety Team in particular:

- The ConCom instituted a **vaccination policy** that required all members to be “up to date” on their vaccinations including bivalent boosters and show proof before picking up their badges. The **registration desk (including vaccine checking) was in a separate room**, rather than out in the open on the second floor, to help separate possibly un- or under-vaccinated members from the general con space. There were **no exceptions** to our vaccine policy, meaning that those who could not be vaccinated (including all children under 6 months) could not attend in-person. The policy also included contractors and vendors such as our childcare providers, our CART providers, and the dealers in the Dealers' Room.
- The ConCom instituted a **masking policy** requiring well-fitting masks in all public WisCon spaces,

with unmasking only permissible for necessary sips or bites. As people have different intake needs for food, drink, or meds for their health, safety, and comfort, we trusted our members to follow the spirit of this policy. **WisCon members overwhelmingly followed the masking policy** in WisCon spaces. We also strongly recommended **high-quality medical-grade masks** rather than cloth masks or other types of masks, and provided such masks to in-person WisCon members for free at the Info Desk.

- The ConCom, COVID-19 Safety Team, and Communications Committee **encouraged members to test** as much as they were able before, during, and after the con, and provided free rapid testing kits as well as information on where to obtain rapid testing kits and PCR tests locally.
- The ConCom instituted a **600-member in-person attendance cap** (down from our typical 800-900 attendance) to ensure that WisCon-exclusive spaces were less crowded. However, this came with tradeoffs in regards to other hotel guests, not subject to our policies, taking up more of the non-WisCon-exclusive spaces. Please see our final case report and takeaways (below) for additional related considerations. Our final in-person attendance was approximately 570 people.
- The **Parties policy was changed** such that no food, and only non-alcoholic beverages, could be served. As Parties are WisCon spaces, masking was still required between sips.
- Only **individually pre-packaged food** was served in the ConSuite, and **meal vouchers were provided** so members who needed them could obtain free hot meals at the hotel or a nearby restaurant following their own safety needs and comfort levels. We also had **designated rooms for eating** for those who were not staying in the hotel and could not eat in their rooms.
- The **Dessert Salon (which includes the Guest of Honor speeches)** utilized a **takeaway format**, with no eating at the salon itself during the speeches and the desserts served afterwards in containers. Dessert Salon seating was a spread out auditorium format (rather than seating people close together at round tables for eating and talking). The Dessert Salon ticket system for both seating and serving discouraged crowding as people waited to be seated or served. The **Dessert Salon was also streamed**, and members attending in person who did not wish to be in the ballroom but still wanted a dessert could purchase a ticket, watch from wherever they felt comfortable, and come get a dessert after the event was over.

- In all **programming spaces**, we requested and the hotel developed individual room layouts such that **seating was reduced and spread out**.
- The 2023 Con Co-Chairs asked for and the SF3 Board approved a **budget of \$3,000 for the COVID-19 Safety Team**; not all of these funds were used.
- The COVID-19 Safety Team provided **free N95 masks, hand sanitizer, and rapid testing kits** to in-person WisCon members. They also provided clear masks to panelists. Here is a list of **supplies purchased or donated** for WisCon 2023.
- The COVID-19 Safety Team used a **reporting and contact tracing form** for anyone who tested positive or was experiencing symptoms, including space for members to specify their locations and activities while at the con. The COVID-19 Safety Team sent **emails with all shareable details of these reports daily at 6pm if new cases had been reported**. The emails included information on local healthcare resources. The COVID-19 Safety Team had a member (with backup) dedicated specifically to the task of communication, compiling and disseminating this information.
- The COVID-19 Safety Team recruited at-con **volunteers to help provide quarantining or isolating WisCon members with supplies** such as food, testing kits, and medication without those members having to leave their rooms.
- The COVID-19 Safety Team distributed **five LEVOIT Core 400S commercial air purifiers** and **fifteen Corsi-Rosenthal boxes** stored from 2022 in key locations around WisCon spaces.
- The COVID-19 Safety Team **purchased materials for 24 additional Corsi-Rosenthal Boxes** to supplement the commercial air purifiers and the hotel's HVAC system. The day before WisCon started, ConCom members, COVID-19 Safety Team members, and at-con volunteers constructed the boxes in a Fan Club party. Between the Corsi-Rosenthal Boxes and the commercial air purifiers, **all public WisCon spaces had at least one kind of supplemental air purification**, with larger spaces having multiple boxes and/or purifiers. After WisCon, most of the Corsi-Rosenthal boxes were given away to reduce storage.

- We also distributed **18 CO2 monitors** throughout WisCon spaces to help members decide if they felt comfortable in the space. The monitors were for informational purposes only.
- And, of course, we did our best to offer **hybrid programming**, including streaming of Guest of Honor speeches and three fully online programming tracks, so that members, whether in-person or online, could participate from their homes or hotel rooms.

We truly believe that the hotel, the ConCom, our Online Con department, our COVID-19 Safety Team, our at-con volunteers, and our entire in-person membership did a great job working together to keep everyone safe! Thank you all so, so much!

Final COVID-19 Case Report and Takeaways

We stopped our case tracking two weeks out from the end of the convention. We had a total reported count of 3 cases, or 0.6% of our estimated 570 in-person attendance. Our COVID-19 reporting was sent directly to all members who had purchased an in-person membership. An anonymized record of all 3 reported cases, and location information, is available publicly at [in this Google sheet](#).

We want to especially extend our thanks to those who tested positive very soon after arriving and took the necessary measures to take care of themselves and keep those around them safe, up to and including leaving the convention entirely. We know it must have been so gut-wrenching and disappointing. Thank you.

Ultimately, we wish there had been zero cases, that no one arrived sick, got sick during travel, or got sick while in Madison for WisCon. But we think everyone who works to put on WisCon — which specifically includes all our members, who *are* the people who make everything from panels to chair-ing possible — did an amazing job doing our best to keep each other safe.

Thank you all for your hard work, your communication, and your care.